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ABSTRACT

Several issues surface during the planning and implementation of field responsive continuing education and staff development programs. Among the issues facing a regional university in assisting a rural school district to plan and implement school-based programs are: (1) the need for collaboration on the part of all parties involved; (2) the environment(s) for functioning in field responsive modes; (3) the impact of field responsive programs on role perceptions and functions of all parties involved in the programs; (4) the kinds of resources that are required; and (5) whether or not credit will be provided for those who work in these programs. (FG)

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RESPONSIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING
EDUCATION FOR RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS
SOME ISSUES AND APPROACHES

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RESPONSIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING
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SOME ISSUES AND APPROACHES

The function(s) of colleges of teacher education have changed and will continue to change to keep pace with the evolution of schools. In most recent times changes made in the educative process have been reflected in moves to teacher centering, school based teacher education programs, and other similar field responsive teacher education programs. The shift has been from the university campus to the field; from a credentialing function to one of providing non-credit staff development assistance to school systems. These shifts in emphasis have placed universities and university personnel in situations in which they have not found themselves before. How universities react and respond to these changing emphases will significantly impact teacher education in the future.

The purpose of this paper is to present some of the issues associated with a regional university establishing and maintaining quality field-based staff development and continuing education programs. The primary emphasis of this paper will be to describe the functioning of a regional university in assisting rural school districts plan and implement school-based responsive staff development programs. The intent of the paper is to provide a discussion of some of the issues which have grown out of five years of field responsive operation, and to describe some practical solutions employed to address those issues.

Over the past five years Murray State University has operated several field responsive continuing education and staff development programs in area

school districts. Some of the projects were federally funded (i.e. Teacher Corps), others were funded through the State Department of Education (e.g. Kentucky Partnership), and still others were operated without the benefit of outside funding. These projects were primarily aimed at improvement of staff development in one school district. These programs were primarily credit based. In 1978 the state Council on Higher Education funded each regional university with a position of Coordinator of Inservice Education. The intent of the council action was to provide at the regional level, a university staff position responsible for working with each school district within a university's service region in non-credit staff development.

Whether a university is involved with credit or non-credit-based field-responsive programs, several common issues appear to surface during the planning and/or implementation of such programs. Among the more salient issues facing field responsive programs are: (1) the need for collaboration on the part of all parties involved; (2) the environment(s) for functioning in field-responsive modes; (3) the impact of field-responsive programs on role perceptions and functioning of all parties involved in the programs, (4) the kinds of resources that field-responsive programs require; and (5) whether or not credit will be provided for those who work in these programs. These issues will be discussed throughout the remainder of this paper, specifically emphasizing actions taken by a rural, regional university in addressing those issues.

Collaboration Is Essential

Collaboration, "writes Janice Weaver (1979, p. 24)" is not mere cooperation on a matter of good will, but an agreed-upon distribution of

power, status, and authority, local districts, school boards, community groups, teachers, administrators, state department officers, college faculty, and administrators all have vested interests in control of the educative process." If staff-development programs are to be established that are truly field responsive, then, by definition, means must be provided through which collaboration can be affected.

A number of different vehicles for collaboration have been established at Murray State University. The position of Coordinator of Inservice Education alluded to above provides perhaps the broadest base for collaborative efforts. The position was established by the state Council on Higher Education to work exclusively in establishing and maintaining collaborative efforts in inservice education. The coordinator is responsible for establishing collaborative mechanisms for interfacing the regional university with twenty-four rural school districts, and the state Department of Education.

In order to affect the interface of the university and public schools for collaborative functioning in staff development, it is essential that representatives of the university (in this instance the Coordinator of Inservice Education) spend a tremendous amount of time in the local school districts. People at many different levels must be contacted, beginning with the central office leadership and continuing through staff members within local buildings. These contacts have various functions, some overt and some covert. The contacts first provide some visibility for the university representatives as someone who is accessible to public school personnel. The contacts provide an arena through which the university representative can listen to concerns and suggestions from public school personnel in a non-judgmental way. More covertly, the contacts help to

provide for the university representative some necessary insights into the political structures, and personalities within the local school districts.

Establishing and maintaining on-site visibility, gaining an understanding of political structures, and personalities involved aid greatly in establishing the context for future collaborative efforts. It may take many different contacts to establish this base of operation but once established all parties come to understand that they are entering into a partnership endeavor that is based on trust and mutuality. These contacts, this establishment of mutual trust and cooperative atmosphere facilitates future moves to establish responsive programs.

The contacts made by the Coordinator of Inservice has resulted in the establishment of vehicles within the school districts which facilitate extensive collaboration. In many districts these contacts have resulted in the structuring of inservice committees both at the district and local level. The coordinator has frequently been called on to train members of these committees. The inservice coordinator functions as a member of the local district committee in most instances again bridging the gap between the university and the public school.

Moving beyond the interactions between the inservice coordinator (representing the university) and public school personnel there are other functions established which interface well with these two agencies in a collaborative manner. Within the service region of the university there is an educational cooperative consisting of twenty-one of the twenty-four districts within the region. There is also a teacher center that works with and represents nineteen of the districts. Members of the policy boards of these two entities, their directors, and the Coordinator of

Inservice meet regularly to plan and implement staff development programs. The State Department of Education constitutes a final agency which deserves mention with respect to the collaborative efforts made for staff development. Field staff from the state department frequently work with university, public school, teacher center, and educational cooperative personnel. Representatives of these groups are frequently called on to generate legislative proposals for staff development.

Regardless of the agency being represented, or the level at which interactions take place. The principle of shared decision-making and power balance is advocated. The fact that there are so many points of interface (i.e., so many different agencies) is an indication that collaboration is desired.

Environments Must Shift

When staff development and continuing education programs move toward more responsive modes of operation there must be an accompanying shift in environments. This shift in environments is both psychological and physical.

A great deal of the shifting of environments in the psychological sense is put into operation with the efforts to establish collaborative involvement in planning and implementing staff development and continuing education programs. But, these collaborative efforts can not be established within an adversary environment. An ideal aim of these efforts at collaboration is to establish what George Lock Land (1973) refers to as an environment for "mutual growth". Under mutual growth conditions the individual has the capacity to affect one's own environment as well as to be affected by it.

Establishing a psychological environment for mutual growth through staff development and continuing education is not easy. The kinds of trust,

understanding, and communication that must exist have had long histories working against them. This lack of trust, understanding and communication is quite evident during initial meetings with persons involved in staff development programs. There is a tentativeness in their voices, an uncertainty in their moves, or overcompensating shifts into rigidity and demanding vocal patterns. Quite often it is necessary to listen as people talk through personal concerns in order to finally get down to some basic trust levels. It is absolutely essential to listen non-judgementally.

Once these levels of trust and understanding are established then there must be accompanying moves toward operating with and utilizing the ideas of all involved in these responsive programs. If people take the risk of putting ideas out for possible inclusion only to find them continually rejected then no mutual growth can occur. If, on the other hand, those ideas are entertained that alone seems to act as a catalyst for further involvement.

The shifting in physical environments for staff development and continuing education is perhaps easier attained than the shift in psychological environments. In fact, shifts in physical environments seem to be a necessary first step toward attaining an environment for mutual growth.

In a pragmatic sense the shifting of physical environments for staff development and continuing education from a state department level to a more regional base. It involves a shift from the university campus to the school district. It involves a shift from the central office of a school system to the different buildings and classrooms within the district.

When responsive staff development programs are established, and these shifts in physical environments result, many materials must of necessity be be transported to specific schools. School based activity centers should be

established wherein small groups and individuals can work on staff development functions. Quite often it is essential for teachers' schedules to be rearranged in order to facilitate small groups meeting during the teaching day to work on professional development tasks.

Accompanying these shifts in the physical environments to the school building level is the shift in the function of time allocated for staff development and continuing education. It is no longer sufficient for some university professor to come out to a school district to "teach a class" in the evening after school. Rather these staff development functions take place throughout the day, with some functions occurring after school, during the evenings, and even on weekends. Essentially then, responsive programs occur in the schools, on a continuing basis.

Role Perceptions and Functions Must Change.

With the advent of responsive staff development and continuing education programs which encompass more collaboration on the part of all parties involved, the shift in environments to the school building level, there is an accompanying change in role perceptions of people involved. No longer is it sufficient for teachers to merely attend inservice days, or university classes as a passive receptical. Rather, their role must change to that of a more active agent involved in determining to a great extent their future role as teachers. No longer is it sufficient for administrators to sit back and watch while all this staff development of teachers takes place. Rather, they must realize and then act on the premise that they are also in need of continuing education. No longer is it sufficient for university faculty to maintain an ivory-tower, campus-based posture of one who has all the answers. Rather, university faculties

must move beyond the campus to the schools and work with teachers as colleagues in quest of a better understanding of the educative process. All these changes will require drastic changes in specific roles of these people.

For the teacher, the change to a more active role in their personal development will require some basic behavioral changes. Teachers must become questioners. They must continually raise questions about their functioning in the classroom and its impact on students. Teachers must become proposers. That is, they must feel comfortable proposing new and different alternative ways of working with youngsters. They must become writers and developers of curriculum materials for use in the classroom rather than merely consumers of commercially produced materials.

Roles of school administrators must change too. The administrator must work on a continual basis with teachers as colleagues rather than subordinates. Administrators must acquaint themselves with all sorts of resources available to teachers. The administrator must be a convener of group meetings. Administrators must be instructional learners who are willing to listen.

Perhaps the people with the most rigid roles and thus the ones most resistant to change are the university professors. Drummond (1978) has identified a number of new and different roles for the university professor functioning in responsive staff development and continuing education programs. Some of these roles are linker, referer, resource retriever. The university professor is an instructional manager, diagnoser/prescriber, and must frequently design programs and materials for non-traditional students. The university professor is an organizational consultant, a communications expert. He/she is an outside as well as participant observer, situation describer, and school

anthropologist. These roles, among others, have to do with governance, funding, management, delivering instructional and technical services, and assessing, evaluating, and disseminating data. (Kersh, 1979)

The shifts in role perceptions and functions has resulted in the formation of building planning teams consisting of public school teachers, administrators, and university personnel. New role functions have led to the utilization of leadership clusters of teachers (usually 8-10 teachers) combined with some administrative and university involvement. These clusters frequently function as self-instructional groups, discussion groups, trouble-shooting groups etc. In many instances we have established colleague feed back mechanisms whereby teachers can observe each other and provide suggestions based on the observations, or, teachers can work in pairs generating directions and activities for teaching. In all these functions the notion of an instructional team prevails.

Resource Identification and Utilization

Establishing responsive staff development and continuing education programs frequently requires new ways of conceptualizing resource identification and utilization. Both human and material resources take on somewhat different functions when utilized in responsive ways.

Perhaps the greatest change in resource identification and utilization is in the area of human resources. It is often essential to identify a wide range of human resources available to function in leadership capacities within these programs. On a state-wide basis, Kentucky has instituted, through the Department of Education a resource identification system called Project SEARCH. This system was established by soliciting from classroom teachers, administrators, university professors, and others information relative to

different areas of expertise they possessed. This information was compiled; computerized, and provided to school districts throughout the state.

In order to utilize personnel identified in SEARCH a school district can either contact the State Department of Education or the person directly. Funds for substitutes are made available to school districts whose teachers are asked to go to another district to assist that district in their staff development efforts.

On a more regional basis, Murray State University, through the College of Human Development and Learning has established a computerized management information system. Faculty provide demographic data relative to their area of expertise. This data is in turn entered into the computer such that it can be retrieved quickly when needs arise.

When a need for university personnel does come in to the university, the office of coordinator of inservice responds to the request. The coordinator, upon receiving a request interacts with the computer by entering descriptors which will identify appropriate resource people. These people are then contacted and information from the entity with the need passed on to the university personnel.

The two systems described above function adequately for short term involvement in staff development programs. However, they are not necessarily that beneficial when a school district wishes to enter into a long-term program. These efforts require still different human resource identification and utilization.

Typically, long term programs utilize personnel from universities as primary resource people. However, if those programs are successful university staff involved must have incorporated into their behavior different role functions. Initially, the identification of such persons is a hit-or-miss process. Some staff members function quite well; others don't work at all.

Once faculty have been found to function effectively they are entered into a pool of resource people for such programs.

Efforts are under way at Murray State to establish a field responsive teaming concept. This concept involves the establishment of teams of people with diverse skills yet with one common denominator--they all work effectively in field responsive settings. This team of people may be assigned to work in one school district for an entire semester, or they may rotate through several systems providing a wide range of expertise to each system. In yet another situation, the team may be divided with some members functioning exclusively in one district while other members of the same team work in another system. After a given period of involvement, perhaps a semester, the staff rotates. These teams, regardless of their mode of operation, generally have a curriculum specialist, an instructional design specialists, someone with a thorough understanding of human growth and development, and an organization person. Other people with different skills are frequently involved, depending on the need. Of course, the kinds of resource utilization described above are somewhat dependant upon availability of people with those skills. There are times when some people are not available due to prior commitments within the "standard program." While many advances have been achieved, there is still the need to establish the interface of the field responsive programs with standard programs.

One group of people frequently interfaced with the university staff as leadership people is personnel from the public school system. Programs are often established with teachers and administrators within the school system functioning as constant, on-site leaders of the program. Through providing continuous contact with the teachers in the respective buildings, these local instructional leaders aid greatly in bridging the gap between the university and public school system while reinforcing the notion of the long term nature of the responsive staff development program.

Identification and utilization of material resources for responsive staff development programs is yet another issue. Some efforts at improving materials for a staff development have recently been made at the state department level. In response to data obtained from different state-wide needs assessment a series of protocol materials were developed. These materials were developed at each of the eight state universities and are available for distribution throughout the state through the regional universities.

Responsive staff development and continuing education programs offered through Murray State have utilized a number of different material resources. Some of the programs utilize materials from the National Diffusion Network (e.g., PATL materials). Other programs develop their own. Still other programs use more traditional commercial materials.

The bottom line with respect to human and material resources is money. Where does it come from? How much is available? How long are these funds available?

Funds for the responsive staff development programs operated in conjunction with Murray State University have come from several sources. Some come from local district funds. Some funds come from the State Department of Education through grants provided to the local district for staff development. Other funds come from federal funds (e.g. Teacher Corps.) and, some funds come from the university at least in the form of assignment of personnel to work in those programs. Some more specific issues relative to funding from the university is discussed below.

Credit or No Credit

One overpowering concern relative to establishing field responsive

programs is the issue of credit. What credit shall be given? What is the basis for awarding credit? Who purchases the credit? What is the relationship between credit and human resources available to the program? How long will the need for credit last -- and, what then?

Quite frequently, the university is approached with the request that a credit based field responsive program be established in a school district. The district making the request frequently want an entire degree program (M.A.) established. These request will ultimately require different faculty providing up to thirty hours of credit over two - to - three years of involvement.

While some of the program request specify the need for standard credit, still others even within the same program want only inservice or continuing education credit. Some of the people involved in the program want no credit at all. This diversity within the same program sometimes causes problems in determining what different people will do for the different types of credit.

The basis for awarding credit in field responsive programs is indeed a problem. To award credit to a teacher for developing and implementing materials and instructional programs within a classroom seems to be heresy within university academe. Programs embodying and endorsing such practices are frequently rejected by the university. Yet, there is increasing evidence that such practices contribute much more to teacher change than does writing papers and giving class reports as is seldom the case in more traditional modes of operation.

If credit is awarded who pays for it? In most instances in programs operating through the university, the individual who receives the credit pays.

There are some programs (Teacher Corps. Partnership, and other special funded programs) provide tuition for students. Some school districts provide some assistance to teachers for the credit.

The relationship between credit and human resources available to the program is a perennial issue. As long as credit hours are generated, and as long as faculty are available, support for field responsive programs seem to flourish. Murray State University is unlike others in that it operates on a common F.T.E. formula. The rub comes in field responsive programs in that in most instances a faculty member does not simply go to the school district for fifteen, three-hour trips. Rather, the faculty member is often found in the school district throughout an entire day, working in classrooms with teachers. Then, at the end of a day the faculty member conducts a full seminar. This mode of operation in and of itself makes field responsive programs distinct. It is that distinctive nature of field responsive programs that seems to demand a re-thinking of F.T.E. funding formulas for such programs. To date we have been able to establish procedures through which faculty can be reassigned to work as program coordinators within the programs, but even then the bottom line as credit hour generated.

But, what does the university do when there is no longer a need for credit for such programs? What does a university do when it has saturated the teaching market with teachers who already have all the credit hours and/or credentials they need? Couple that situation with the condition of almost no teacher turnover and the credentialing, credit granting function becomes even more tenuous.

There seems to be little question but what the overall function of teacher education, at least at the graduate level will have to change to be

more responsive to the needs of its clientele. Teacher education will have to shift its function from providing credit and credentialing to entering into long-term agreements with local school districts as resource people for long-term staff development programs. The needs do now, and will continue to exist for that kind of involvement.

Summary

In summary, the need for continuous involvement in long-term staff development and continuing education programs will persist. These programs will increasingly demand collaborative efforts of all parties involved if they are to function successfully. Such staff development and continuing education programs will steadily move from a centralized environment to the local school building level. Such programs will increasingly demand that personnel involved must assume new and different roles and modes of operation. We have only begun to identify and utilize the vast resources available to us for such programs and the issue of credit, what of it? Perhaps in another twenty-five years someone might ask, "What was that?" The real issue facing universities, and especially colleges of education is, "Can we adapt?"

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